

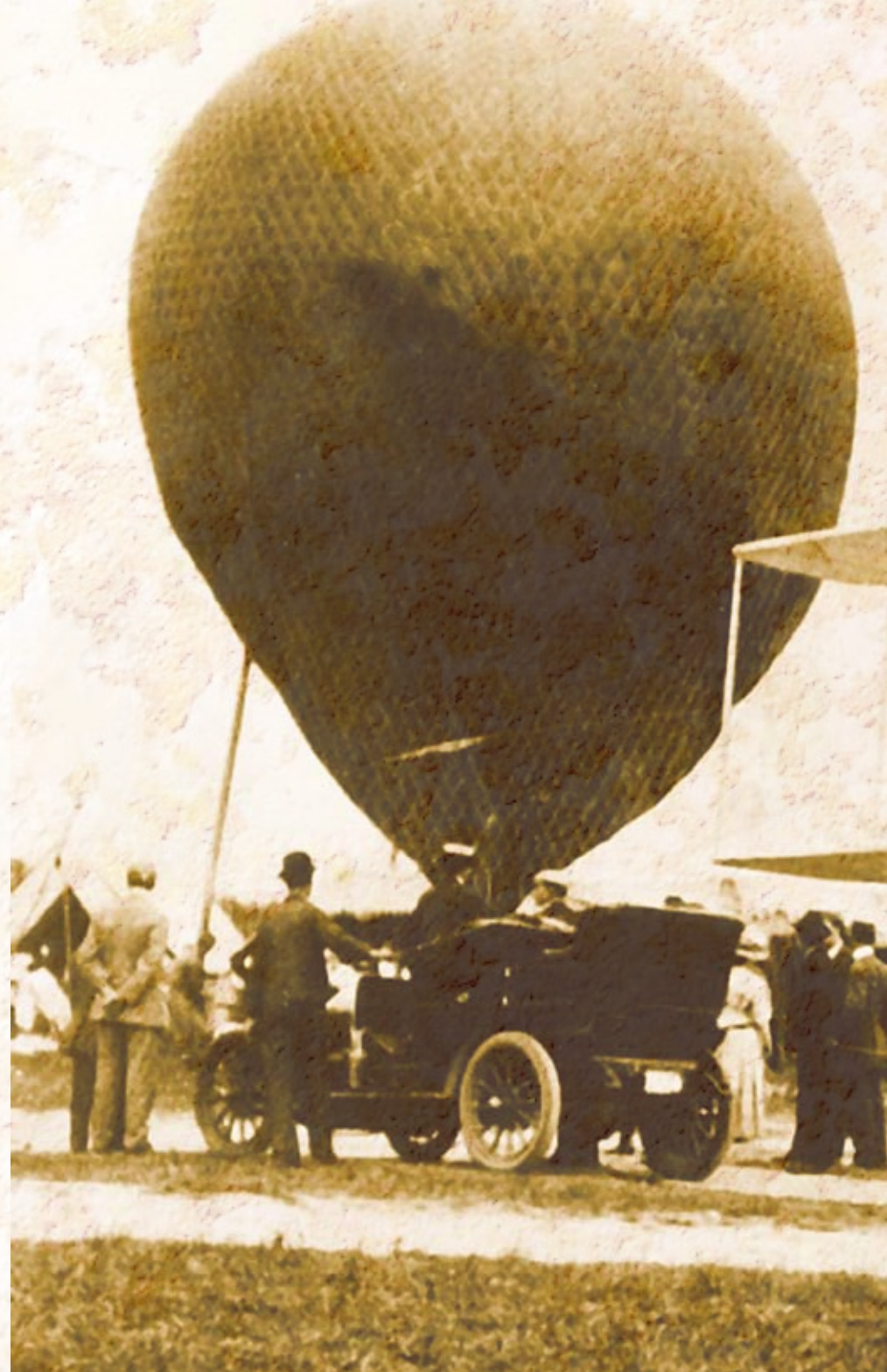
# The first 47

**F**irst Lt. James Rung was a navigator on a B-17 Flying Fortress during World War II. He said the many perilous bombing missions he flew over England were scary.

Although World War II veterans are known as America's "Greatest Generation," the former lieutenant said he's quite impressed with Airmen of today.

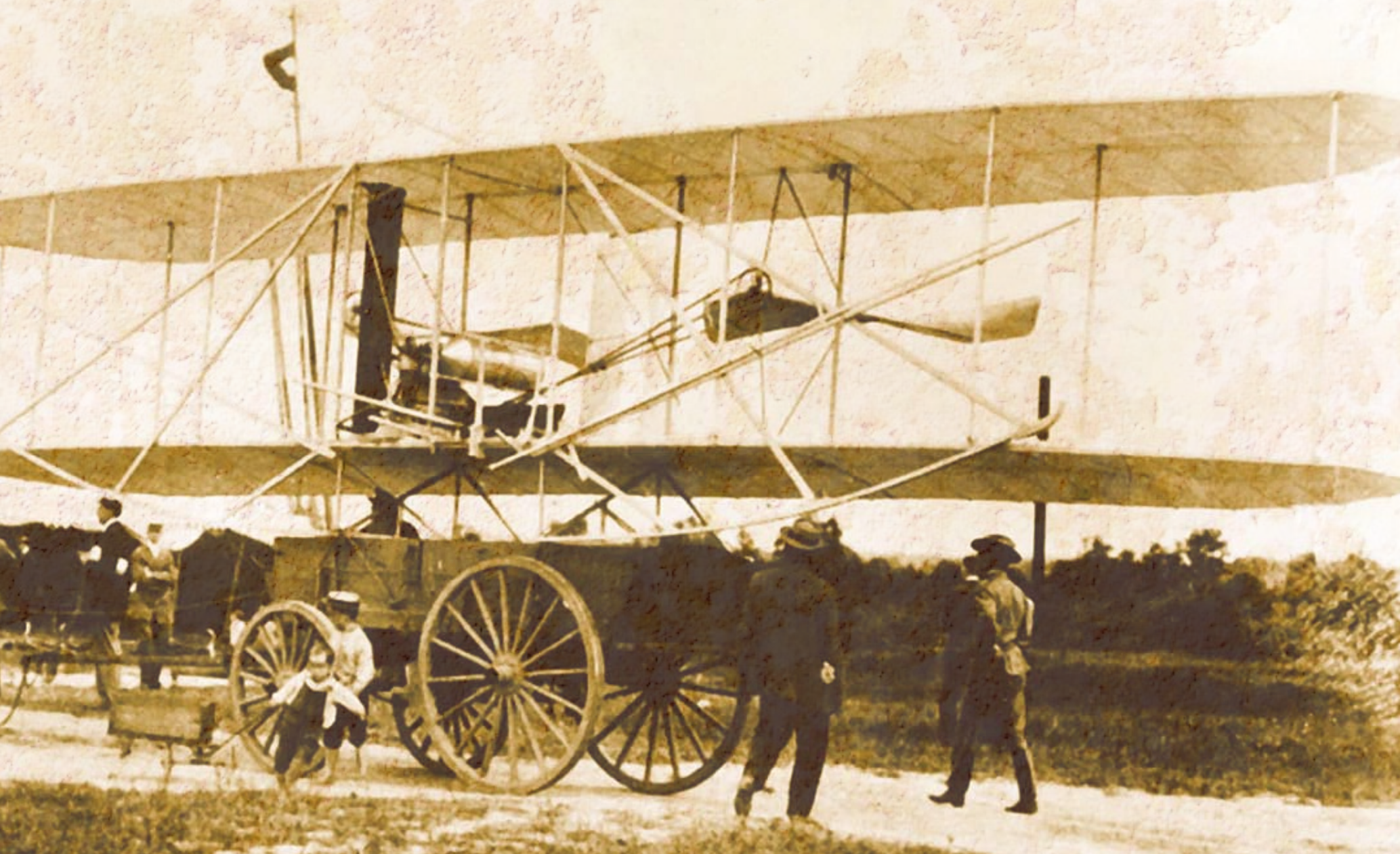
"The weapons have improved so much," said Mr. Rung, who was in the Air Force from January 1943 to April 1945. "We had up to nine people on our aircrews. Today, all you need is a pilot and co-pilot."

Technology has always proven to be the key to airpower advancement. From hydrogen balloons in 1861, to the Wright Brothers first flight in 1903, to Charles Lindbergh flying nonstop from New York to Paris in 1927, the advancement of technology was as important back then as it is today.





The Wright Brothers Flyer arrives on a wagon at Fort Myers, Va., in August 1909 to undergo flight tests – while its predecessor, a balloon, looms in the background.







**"When my brother and I built the first man-carrying flying machine we thought that we were introducing into the world an invention which would make further wars practically impossible."**

**Orville Wright**



Bystanders help remove mortally-wounded Lt. Thomas Selfridge from the wreck of a Wright Brothers Flyer after it crashed during performance tests at Fort Myers, Va., on Sept. 17, 1908. Orville Wright was also injured.



Orville Wright soars over Kitty Hawk, N.C., October 1911.

(Left to right) Capt. Frederick Hennessy, Lt. Henry Arnold, Lt. Roy Kirtland, Capt. Frank Kennedy, Lt. Samuel McLeary, Lt. Harold Geiger, Lt. Thomas Milling and Lt. Louis Rockwell at College Park, Md., in 1911. Lieutenants Arnold and Milling were the first to qualify as military aviators, along with Capt. Charles Chandler.







### **Sept. 24, 1861**

Balloonist Thaddeus S.C. Lowe floated in a hydrogen balloon 1,000 feet over the Potomac River, near Washington, D.C., and helped aim Union fire at Confederate troops.

### **Oct. 1, 1861**

The U.S. Army formed its first Balloon Corps, consisting of five balloons and 50 men.

### **Feb. 8, 1903**

The U.S. War Department accepted the Wrights' bid of \$25,000 to furnish one heavier-than-air flying machine within 200 days. It had to be able to carry two men and fly at a speed of 40 mph.

### **March 23, 1903**

The first patent on the Wright Brothers' airplane based on their 1902 glider was filed in America. It wasn't issued until May 22, 1906.

### **Dec. 17, 1903**

Orville Wright made the first controlled, sustained, power-driven free flight in a heavier-than-air machine. The sustained flight of 852 feet lasted 59 seconds.

### **May 19, 1908**

Lt. Thomas E. Selfridge became the first American servicemember to solo in an aircraft, the Aerial Experiment Association's "White Wing." Three months later, on Sept. 17, 1908, while flying as a passenger with Orville Wright, he became the first person to die in an aircraft accident.





**"He was the most daring aviator and greatest fighter pilot of the entire war. His life is one of the brightest glories of our Air Service. He went on a rampage and shot down 14 enemy aircraft, including 10 balloons, in eight days. No other Ace ... even the dreaded Richthofen had ever come close to that."**

**Capt. Edward V. "Eddie" Rickenbacker said of Lt. Frank Luke, America's second ranking Ace in World War I. Captain Rickenbacker was the leading Ace.**



An Army major flies over enemy territory near France in an observation balloon in June 1918, during World War I.

Brig. Gen. William "Billy" Mitchell stands by a Vought VE-7 Bluebird at Bolling Airfield, Washington, D.C., in May 1920. The VE-7 was an advanced military trainer, observer, and fighter of World War I.







Lt. Frank Luke, who ran against Capt. Eddie Rickenbacker for the honor of being called the Ace of Aces for American fliers overseas, poses next to one of three German observation balloons he brought down in 30 minutes in 1918.

### **Jan. 19, 1910**

Lt. Paul Beck, Army Signal Corps, acted as the Army's first aerial bombardier when he drops three two-pound sandbags from a biplane, attempting to hit a ground target during the Los Angeles Flying meet.

### **March 2, 1910**

Lt. Benjamin Foulois flew solo for the first time over Fort Sam Houston, Texas. At the time, he was the only pilot in the Aeronautical Division of the Signal Corps.

### **March 19, 1910**

Orville Wright opened the first Wright Flying School near Montgomery, Ala., the current site of Maxwell Air Force Base.

### **Feb. 27, 1911**

Along the Mexican border, near Laredo, Texas, Lt. Benjamin Foulois and Philip Parmalee, a Wright instructor pilot, used a Wright Brothers Flyer to demonstrate the potential of the airplane used in coordination with ground troops.

### **July 13, 1916**

The 1st Aero Company, New York National Guard, was called to federal service during a border crisis with Mexico. Although they don't deploy, it was the first time an air unit of the National Guard was called to duty by federal authorities.

### **Nov. 7, 1917**

Cpl. Eugene Jacques Bullard, an American pilot in French service, became the first African American pilot to score an aerial victory during World War I.





**"The experienced fighting pilot does not take unnecessary risks. His business is to shoot down enemy planes, not to get shot down. His trained hand and eye and judgment are as much a part of his armament as his machine-gun, and a 50-50 chance is the worst he will take — or should take — except where the show is of the kind that . . . justifies the sacrifice of plane or pilot."**

**Capt. Edward V. "Eddie"  
Rickenbacker**



There weren't many early women aviators, but Betty Gillies was one of the first. Her mother said that she wouldn't amount to anything unless she gave up those silly ideas of soaring in the sky.

An MB-2 hits its target, the obsolete battleship USS Alabama, during tests on Sept. 27, 1921. The MB-2 aircraft bombed and sank the ex-U.S. Navy battleship Alabama in Tangier Bay, Chesapeake Bay, Md., to prove the usefulness of airpower because of the influence of Brig. Gen. William "Billy" Mitchell.





Dr. Robert H. Goddard stands beside a 1926 liquid-fueled rocket. The rocket, on top, receives its fuel by two lines from the tank at the bottom. The doctor's rockets made little impression upon government officials.

### **July 29, 1921**

Brig. Gen. Billy Mitchell's bombing and sinking of the Ostfriesland during tactical tests proved the usefulness of airpower.

### **Sept. 4, 1922**

Lt. Jimmy Doolittle made the first transcontinental flight, taking off from Pablo Beach, Fla., refueling at Kelly Field, Texas, and landing at Rockwell Field, Calif., flying a total of 2,163 miles in 22 hours, 27 minutes.

### **Dec. 17, 1925**

After a reduction in rank, Col. Billy Mitchell was found guilty of "conduct of a nature to bring discredit upon the military service" after a highly-publicized court-martial. He resigned on Feb. 1, 1926.

### **May 20-21, 1927**

Charles Lindbergh, a captain in the Missouri National Guard, flew the first solo, nonstop transatlantic flight from New York to Paris.

### **Sept. 24, 1929**

What he later considered to be his single most important contribution to aviation, Lt. James "Jimmy" Doolittle made the first all-blind flight at Mitchel Field, N.Y. Accompanied by a check pilot, Lieutenant Doolittle took off in a Consolidated NY-2 airplane with a completely covered cockpit, flew a short distance, and landed.





**"A squadron commander who sits in his tent and gives orders and does not fly, though he may have the brains of Solomon, will never get the results that a man will, who, day in and day out, leads his patrols over the line and infuses into his pilots the 'esprit de corps.'"**

**Brig. Gen. William "Billy" Mitchell, Assistant Chief, U.S. Army Air Service**



Women workers install fixtures and assemblies to a tail fuselage section of a B-17F Flying Fortress bomber at the Long Beach, Calif., plant in October 1942.





Brig. Gen. Anthony C. Mcauliffe, artillery commander of the 101st Airborne Division, gives his various glider pilots last-minute instructions in England on June 7, 1944, before the take-off on D-Day plus 1.



### **Feb. 19, 1934**

The Army Air Corps took a stab at delivering U.S. mail under orders of the president, but the loss of nine Airmen suspended the service briefly in March, eventually resulting in a commercial contract later in June.

### **March 28, 1935**

Dr. Robert Goddard launched the first gyroscopically-controlled rocket.

### **Sept. 16, 1940**

Congress enacted the Selective Service Act, which instituted the peacetime draft for all American men, including African Americans.

### **Jan. 11, 1941**

The U.S. Army Air Corps tested radio control robot planes from the ground and from another plane.

### **June 20, 1941**

The Army Air Forces was established to control both the Air Corps and the Air Force Combat Command.

### **Dec. 7, 1941**

Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. Of the nearly 2,390 American deaths that day, 193 were in the Army Air Force. The next day, Japanese forces attacked the Philippines, destroying some 100 aircraft, and killing 80 and wounding another 150 Airmen.

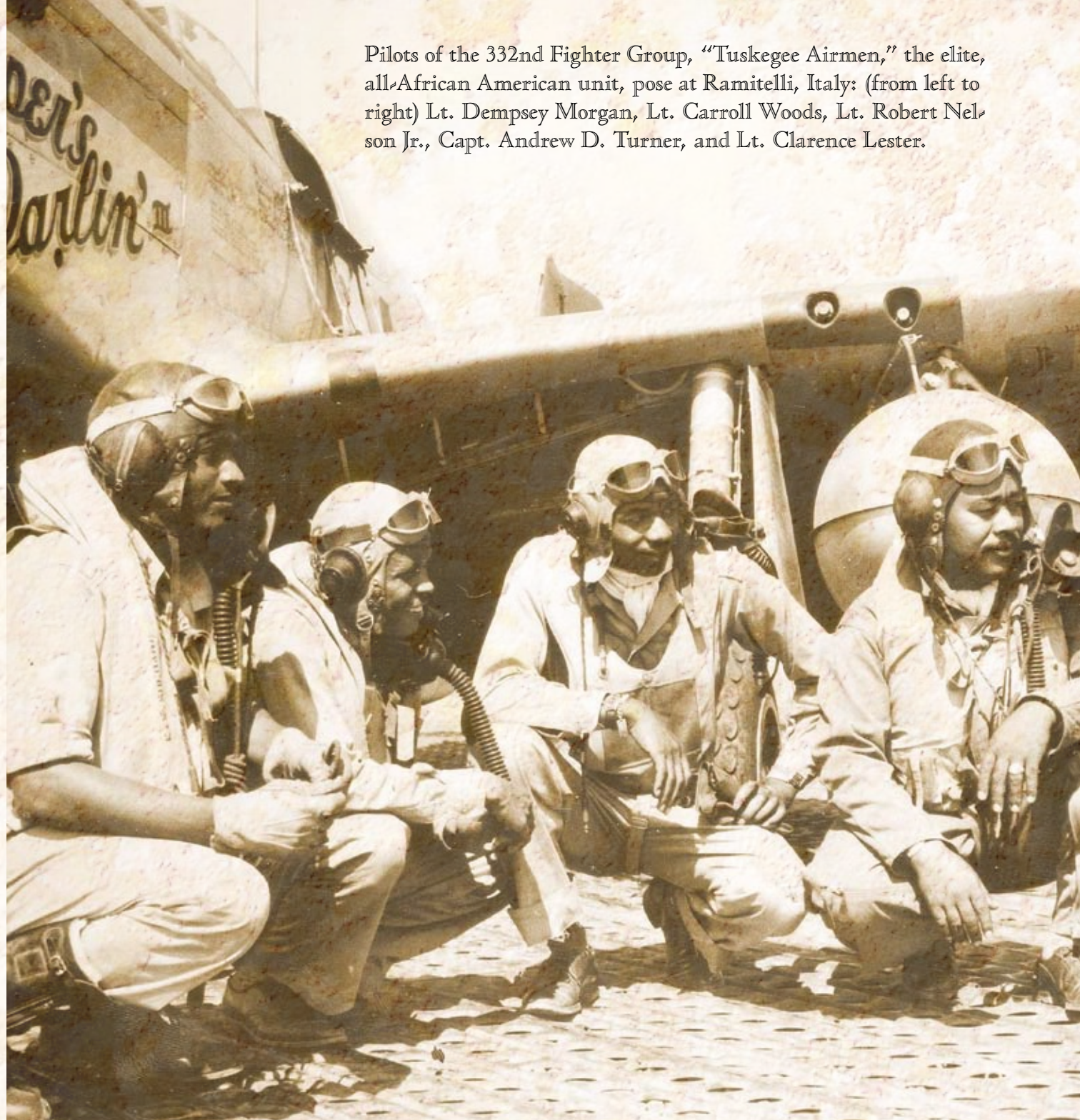




**"If we should have to fight,  
we should be prepared  
to do so from the neck up  
instead of from the neck  
down."**

**Brig. Gen. James H. Doolittle,  
U.S. Army Air Corps. He was  
promoted to general in June,  
1985 and died Sept. 27, 1993.**

Pilots of the 332nd Fighter Group, "Tuskegee Airmen," the elite, all-African American unit, pose at Ramitelli, Italy: (from left to right) Lt. Dempsey Morgan, Lt. Carroll Woods, Lt. Robert Nelson Jr., Capt. Andrew D. Turner, and Lt. Clarence Lester.







Marty Volkomener sits in the cockpit of her training aircraft at the start of her Women's Airforce Service Pilots class in 1943 in Sweetwater, Texas.



A dense column of smoke rises more than 60,000 feet into the air over the Japanese port of Nagasaki as the result of an atomic bomb, the second ever used in warfare, dropped on the industrial center Aug. 9, 1945, from a B-29 Superfortress.

### March 6, 1942

The first class of Tuskegee Airmen graduated from U.S. Army Air Force Tuskegee Army Airfield, Ala.

### April 18, 1942

Lt. Col. James H. Doolittle led 16 B-25 Mitchell Bombers that took off from an aircraft carrier and attacked the Japanese homeland. Sagging American morale got a boost when the headlines announced the strike against the Japanese capital city.

### Jan. 15, 1943

The Pentagon opened its doors as the new headquarters for the War Department.

### July 8, 1943

Col. Malcolm Grow, 8th Air Force surgeon, received the Legion of Merit for developing the flak vest and steel helmet.

### Aug. 5, 1943

The Women's Flying Training Detachment and the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron combined to form the Women's Airforce Service Pilots under Jacqueline Cochran's leadership.

### Aug. 6, 1945

Col. Paul Tibbets Jr., flying the "Enola Gay B-29," dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan.